

WORKFORCE TRAINING AND EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

Workplace Skills Content Definition

Adopted March 18, 1999

Background:

The Washington State Supreme Court has stated that the Legislature's duty to make ample provision for education of all children "...*would be hollow indeed if the possessor of the right could not compete adequately in our open political system, **in the labor market, or in the marketplace of ideas (emphasis added).***" While the paramount duty of the state includes preparing students for the world of work, this is one of the weaker areas of our current K-12 system. Both employers and former students indicate that high schools have much to improve in preparing students in work skills. In a 1997 survey by WTECB, employers reported they have widespread difficulty in finding students with general workplace skills. In a WTECB survey of 850 recent high school students from 67 schools, former students were asked how well their high school prepared them in developing specific skills. The students said that their high school was weakest in preparing them to "see the link between school and the 'real world,' understand what is required for success, set goals for the future, and independently solve problems."

In the 1998 update to "High Skills, High Wages: Washington's Comprehensive Plan for Workforce Training and Education," the Board recommended: "The State Board of Education (SBE) should include a requirement that students demonstrate their proficiency in workplace skills (such as good work habits, teamwork, accepting supervision) in its new performance-based graduation requirements. WTECB should advise SBE on what specifically are workplace skills." SBE established the Graduation Requirements and Diploma (GRAD) Committee to develop recommendations for a system or set of revised high school graduation requirements that is consistent with the K-12 education reform effort. The GRAD Committee invited WTECB to present its definition of workplace skills. The Board adopted the following definition of workplace skills at its March 18, 1999 meeting.

The content areas identified in this definition were developed after a review of the specific content that is included in statewide standards that are work-related by states throughout the country. The attached Table 1 is a summary of the content areas included in these states' definitions. Table 2 is a cross-content matrix of the workplace skills and the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). This later table also identifies which EALRs that relate to workplace skills will be assessed in the tenth grade on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning.

The "Workplace Skills" content definition includes three categories—"career preparation," "workplace habits," and "workplace competencies."

1. Career Preparation: The career preparation category includes basic career-related information and skills that a student should possess in preparing for a career of his or her own personal interest through either further education or direct entrance into the employment world or a combination of the two. A common assessment strategy in this category is the completion of a portfolio with examples of work that demonstrate a student's preparedness for a productive post-high school future.

Students are aware of career opportunities, demonstrate the planning and setting of career goals, show evidence of relating their personal interests to careers, are able to conduct a job search and retain or advance in a job, and are able to start an enterprise.

2. Workplace Habits: The "workplace habits" category includes behaviors that employers expect in the workplace. Research in this area suggests that such behaviors can be reinforced by schools through implementation of policies affecting attendance, homework, and discipline. Common indicators in this category are attendance and homework completion records and letters of recommendation.

Students are aware of workplace habits and show evidence of their effort, initiative, self-control, and ability to follow supervision, integrity/honesty, safe behavior, and their ability to balance work and their personal lives.

3. Workplace Competencies: The "workplace competencies" category includes the generic knowledge and skills needed in the workplace, regardless of the occupation. Occupational or industry specific skills are not included. This category only includes work-related skills and knowledge that are not incorporated in the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) or those which cannot be tested in the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) protocol. For instance, thinking skills (creative thinking, problem-solving, etc.) are critical skills for the workplace and are fully addressed in the EALRs and tested in the WASL and, therefore, are not included here. Proficiency levels in this category are measured through a wide variety of authentic or performance-based assessment methodologies.

- a. Technology:** Students are able to select the appropriate procedures or tools, apply technology to the task, and maintain technology.
- b. Information:** Students are able to acquire and evaluate information, organize and maintain information, interpret and communicate information properly, and use computers to process information.
- c. Teamwork:** Students are able to participate as a member of a team, teach others, serve clients/customers, exercise leadership, operate effectively within an organization, negotiate, and work with cultural diversity.
- d. Systems:** Students understand systems, are able to monitor and correct system performance, and are able to improve and design systems.
- e. Resource Management:** Students are able to allocate time, money, material and facility, and human resources.

Table 2: Cross-Content Matrix of Workplace Skills and Essential Academic Learning Requirements (Benchmark 3)*

Workplace Skills	Currently Available Assessments				Assessments to be Developed						
	Reading	Writing	Commun- Ication	Math	Science	History	Geography	Civics	Economics	Arts	Health/ Fitness
1. Career Preparation											
a. Career Awareness	3.4.1		4.4.1	5.3.2					1.2.2		
b. Relating Personal Interest to Careers					5.4.3			4.3.2			4.1.2
c. Planning and Setting Career Goals											
d. Job Search	3.2.1	2.2.1									
e. Job Retention/ Advancement											
f. Entrepreneurship											
2. Workplace Habits											
a. Awareness of Workplace Habits											
b. Personal Striving (effort, initiative)										1.4.1	
c. Integrity/Honesty			3.1.3								
d. Self-Management (self-control, ability to follow supervision)	4.1.2	4.1.2	4.1.2-3							1.4.1	3.3.1 3.4.1
e. Safe Behavior					2.1.3 2.1.7						1.2.1 1.4.2 2.3.1-4
f. Balance of Work and Family											1.3.1 3.1.1 4.2.1

* Numbers are EARL components. The numbers that are bold and shaded are measured on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).

	Currently Available Assessments				Assessments to be Developed						
	Reading	Writing	Communi- cation	Math	Science	History	Geography	Civics	Economics	Arts	Health/ Fitness
3. Technology											
a. Selects Appropriate Procedures or Tools	1.5.3	3.5.2	2.5.1	1.1.7 4.1.3	1.3.1 2.1.3					1.3.1	
b. Applies Technology to the Task	1.5.3	3.5.3	2.5.2		1.3.1 2.1.3					1.3.2	
c. Maintains Technology											
4. Information											
a. Acquires and Evaluates Information	1.5.1 3.1.3	3.1.3		4.1.2	4.1.2	2.1.2				3.3.1	3.2.1
b. Organizes and Maintains Information	1.4.3 3.1.2	3.1.3 3.2.2		2.3.1 4.2.1	2.2.3	2.2.1				3.3.1	
c. Interprets and Communicates Properly	3.1.3 3.1.4			3.1.1 4.3.1-2	4.2.1-2	2.3.2				3.3.1	
d. Uses Computers to Process Information		3.1.2			4.3.1-2						

	Currently Available Assessments				Assessments to be Developed						
	Reading	Writing	Communication	Math	Science	History	Geography	Civics	Economics	Arts	Health/ Fitness
5. Teamwork											
a. Participates as Member of a Team	3.3.1	3.1.1 3.2.1								1.5.2	
b. Teaches Others	4.3.1	4.2.2									3.3.2
c. Serves Clients/Customers											
d. Exercises Leadership			3.3.5								
e. Operates Effectively Within an Organization			3.2.2-3								
f. Negotiates			3.3.1-4								3.3.1
g. Works with Cultural Diversity			3.1.4 3.3.1								
6. Systems											
a. Understands Systems					1.6.1-2		3.3.1	1.3.2 2.3.2	1.1.3 1.2.1 1.3.1		
b. Monitors and Corrects Performance					1.6.1-3		3.3.2	1.3.1 2.3.3			
c. Improves and Designs Systems							3.3.3				
7. Resources											
a. Time, Money, Materials & Facilities, and Human Resources					2.1.3				1.1.1		